
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

Staff Interim Update

September 30, 2015

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) is a bipartisan statutory committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. Established in 1972, its purpose is to “conduct program reviews and investigations to assist the General Assembly in the proper discharge of its duties” (C.G.S. Sec. 2-53g). Through program reviews, the committee is charged with “examining state government programs and their administration to ascertain whether such programs are effective, continue to serve their intended purposes, are conducted in an efficient and effective manner, or require modification or elimination” (C.G.S. Sec. 2-53d). Investigations require broader legislative approval to conduct. The committee is authorized to raise and report bills on matters under its review.

The program review committee is composed of 12 members. The president pro tempore of the Senate, the Senate minority leader, the speaker of the House, and the House minority leader each appoint three members. The committee co-chairs and ranking members rotate every two years between House and Senate members for each party.

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Interim Update Contents

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

This interim update report:

- identifies research questions intended to be answered by the study's conclusion, based on the study scope approved by the committee (Appendix A);
- explains the study timeline;
- discusses completed and anticipated PRI staff study activities; and
- presents selected background information relevant to understanding the study topic.

The next and final staff report following this interim report will:

- answer the identified research questions;
- make findings; and
- propose recommendations, if needed.

The final staff report will be presented after PRI staff has completed its research and analysis, which is ongoing. As noted in the study timeline, the final staff report is expected to be presented December 16, 2015.

Acronyms

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| ABA | Applied Behavior Analysis |
| ACES | Area Cooperative Educational Services, a RESC serving the southcentral part of the state |
| ACIR | Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations |
| AFT | American Federation of Teachers |
| ASTE | Agricultural Science and Technology Education |
| AT | Assistive Technology |
| C.E.S. | Cooperative Educational Services, a RESC serving the southwest part of the state |
| CABE | Connecticut Association of Boards of Education |
| CAPSS | Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents |
| CAS | Connecticut Association of Schools |
| CASBO | Connecticut Association of School Business Officials |
| CBA | Collective Bargaining Agreement |
| CEA | Connecticut Education Association |
| CIRMA | Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency |
| COG | Council of Governments |
| COSTA | Connecticut School Transportation Association |
| CREC | Capitol Region Education Council, a RESC serving the northcentral part of the state |
| CSDE | Connecticut State Department of Education |
| CTHSS | Connecticut Technical High School System |
| EASTCONN | RESC serving the northeast region of the state |
| ESA | Educational Services Agency |
| ESEA | Elementary and Secondary Education Act |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| GED | General Equivalency Diploma |
| IEP | Individualized Education Program |
| IT | Information Technology |
| LEARN | RESC serving the southeastern part of the state |
| MORE Commission | Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies Commission |
| NCIS | Non-Certified Instructional Staff |
| NCLB | No Child Left Behind |
| OPM | Office of Policy and Management |
| OT | Occupational Therapy |
| PD | Professional Development |
| PT | Physical Therapy |
| RESC | Regional Educational Service Center |
| RSD | Regional School District |
| SBE | State Board of Education |

Research Questions and Study Timeline

Research Questions

1. What types of regional cooperation involving local boards of education exist, and how often do they occur?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of regional cooperative efforts?
3. For successful regional cooperation, what barriers, if any, are getting in the way of expanding and replicating these efforts more widely, and what possible strategies could be used to overcome these obstacles?

Study Timeline

- **January 2015:** Proposed Senate Bill 997, to require the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) to study regional cooperation between local boards of education, was referred to the Education Committee with no further action taken on the bill.
- **February 2015:** PRI voted to direct its staff to develop a draft scope of study for the topic.
- **April 2015:** PRI voted to approve the study scope.
- **September 30, 2015:** PRI staff is scheduled to present this interim study update to the committee.
 - After the interim study update on the same day, PRI will hold an informational public hearing to gather input and viewpoints relevant to the study topic from interested parties.
- **On or about December 16, 2015:** PRI staff will present a final report containing background, findings, and recommendations to the PRI committee for its consideration of and action on recommendations.
- **After December 16, 2015:** The final committee-approved study report will be published.
- **During the 2016 legislative session:** The PRI committee may raise legislation for the 2016 legislative session to implement any study recommendations through statute. Any bills raised by PRI based on study recommendations would be the subject of a public hearing during the 2016 legislative session.

Completed

1. Review of relevant statutes, bills, and other legislative documents
2. Interviews with executive branch and regional educational service center personnel
 - Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
 - All six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs):
 - ACES (Area Cooperative Educational Services – RESC serving the southcentral part of the state)
 - C.E.S. (Cooperative Educational Services – RESC serving the southwest part of the state)
 - CREC (Capitol Region Education Council – RESC serving northcentral part of the state)
 - EASTCONN (RESC serving northeastern part of the state)
 - EDUCATION CONNECTION (RESC serving northwestern part of the state)
 - LEARN (RESC serving the southeastern part of the state)
3. In-person and telephone interviews with local and regional school district administrators
 - Development of a telephone interview protocol to obtain detailed information from school districts on regional cooperative efforts
4. Interviews with personnel from organizations supporting educational administration, including:
 - Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
 - Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS)
 - Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS)
 - Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO)
5. Interviews with other stakeholders including:
 - Connecticut American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
 - Connecticut Education Association (CEA)
 - Connecticut School Transportation Association (COSTA)
6. Requested data or reports from various organizations
 - CSDE
 - RESCs
 - CASBO
 - CAS

Anticipated

1. Ongoing telephone interviews of school district administrators
2. Continued interviews of key stakeholders
3. Continued identification and review of relevant written reports and articles regarding cooperative efforts both within and outside Connecticut
4. Analyses of data received from various organizations as well as through interviews, literature reviews, and other sources

Topic Background

Introduction

Under a number of Connecticut statutes, two or more local school districts are permitted to jointly provide services, programs, or activities. These cooperative efforts can vary widely – from two school districts agreeing to share a food services director to the creation of a regional school district serving children in grades K-12. Appendix B contains a summary of statutes pertaining to regional cooperation between local boards of education.

An expected benefit of regional cooperation among school districts may be that programs or services can be provided at a reduced cost, compared to each district individually providing the service or program. At a minimum, the anticipated benefit might be that future costs are contained. Besides potential financial advantages, regional cooperative efforts may expand a district's course offerings and programs, or otherwise provide a benefit to the district.

While cooperative efforts may involve two or more school districts, that is not the only form they may take. Partners in cooperation may include, for example, Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), municipal governments, or other entities. The following list illustrates some of the possibilities:

Directly, between two or more districts:

- School districts agree to join together, for example, to create a program to serve students with a particular need (under a cooperative arrangement¹ or a shared service agreement²).
- To provide agri-science education, any school district that does not have an agri-science center must have an agreement with a district with an agri-science center for their high school students to attend.³
- To provide a high school education, any school district without a high school must designate at least one high school in another district for their students to attend.⁴

Indirectly, through a RESC and two or more districts:

- A RESC may provide the same program or service to two or more school districts in such areas as special education, adult education, and professional development.⁵

¹ C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a.

² C.G.S. Sec.10-239k.

³ C.G.S. Sec. 10-64.

⁴ C.G.S. Sec. 10-33.

⁵ C.G.S. Secs. 10-66a, 10-66o, 10-66p, and 10-66q.

Through merger:

- Two or more towns may agree to form a regional school district, providing education for some or all grades.⁶

Directly, between a school district and a non-education partner:

- A district and a municipality, for example, may share a business manager or another operational employee (C.G.S. Sec. 10-239k).

Because the focus of this study is on regional cooperation between local boards of education, cooperative efforts of the last type will be noted but not described in detail in this report.

The next section of this report describes regional cooperative efforts for both instructional and operational purposes. The remaining sections of the report will provide more detailed explanations of statutorily prescribed means by which regional cooperation between school districts may occur including: through and with RESCs; agri-science centers; designated high schools and cooperative arrangements; and regional school districts.

Categories of Regional Cooperative Efforts

Based on a literature review, PRI staff developed a framework to organize regional cooperative efforts into six categories:

Instructional:

1. special education pupil programs and services;
2. general education pupil programs and services;
3. professional development and services;

Operational:

4. pupil transportation;
5. cooperative purchasing; and
6. administrative services/back office functions.

Categories 1 through 3 are considered instructional, as they pertain to educational services provided directly to students. Categories 4 through 6 are considered operational, as they relate to the logistics and oversight of school operations rather than educational services.

Regional Cooperation and Special Education

Programs and services for students requiring special education were among the earliest collaborations between school districts and RESCs,⁷ in large part due to the expense and expertise required to offer special education services and programs. In the 2013-2014 school year, approximately one in eight Connecticut public school students in grades K-12 required

⁶ C.G.S. Sec. 10-39.

⁷ RESCs furnish programs and services to Connecticut's public school districts and are discussed in greater detail later in this report.

special education services.⁸ While general education costs rose 36 percent in the past decade, special education costs rose 54 percent.⁹

Through individualized education programs (IEPs), school districts may be required to provide various related services to students, depending on the type of disability. Services may include speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, applied behavior analysis (ABA), or counseling with psychologists, social workers, or other clinical personnel. Multiple school districts may work jointly with a RESC to provide such related services to students with special education needs.

Some students with special needs may require assistive technology (AT) devices:

- Low-tech AT devices may be as simple as handheld magnifiers, specialized pen or pencil grips, or large print text.
- Middle of the continuum AT devices include talking spell checkers, electronic organizers, and large computer monitors.
- The more expensive high-tech AT devices, which are likely to require training to utilize, include power wheelchairs or scooters and communication devices with voices.

Districts may make arrangements with RESCs or other districts to share access to various types of AT. For students unable to benefit from education in mainstream classrooms, separate classrooms or schools provide instructional and clinical support. There are also extended day services and summer/extended year services for some students receiving special education services. Older students with certain disabilities may participate in transitional programs through age 21. Delivery of such services outside of the general education program may be accomplished through cooperative arrangements between school districts or in conjunction with a RESC.

Regional Cooperation and General Education

Beyond special education programs and services, there may be regional cooperation between local boards of education to share personnel for art, music, gifted and talented, and language programs. Provision of substitute teachers and library/media services are two additional areas where regional cooperation may exist.

Distance or online learning opportunities may also occur across school districts, or between school districts and other partners such as RESCs. Early childhood education, including pre-K and Head Start, are other places where instructional cooperative arrangements may occur. Additionally, school districts may share summer school programs, programs for suspended or expelled students, or athletic programs (e.g., a cooperative football team).

⁸ Connecticut State Department of Education. *The Condition of Education in Connecticut: 2013-2014*. Accessed on - line at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/board/boardmaterials040615/iii_c_receipt_of_the_report_on_the_condition_of_education_2013_14.pdf on September 16, 2015.

⁹ PRI staff analysis of CSDE End-of-Year Expenditure Report (ED001) data from school years 2003-04 and 2013-14.

Adult education. Each local or regional board of education is statutorily required to “...establish and maintain a program of adult classes or shall provide for participation in a program of adult classes for its adult residents through cooperative arrangements with one or more other boards of education, one or more cooperating eligible entities or a regional educational service center....”¹⁰ Adult education classes may be offered cooperatively among two or more school districts and range from general education diploma (GED), English as a second language (ESL), and citizenship classes, to community recreational offerings such as tennis and knitting.

Regional Cooperation and Professional Development

Professional development can be broadly defined as assisting in the continuous professional growth of all school district employees. Certified school employees¹¹ are required to participate in at least 18 hours of professional development.¹² Regional cooperation among school districts may include joining together for training and workshops to satisfy continuing education requirements. Para-professionals and other non-certified staff may also take advantage of shared professional development arrangements.

Professional development may also be provided via RESCs, for example, for coaching, such as for one-on-one training in use of AT for a student with a particular disability. There are also content and skill areas that are of interest across school districts, such as training in educator evaluation, school culture and climate, and working with diverse learners. Curriculum development and establishment of professional learning communities are other aspects of professional development that may lend themselves to regional cooperation. Grant and report writing are additional areas where cooperation across school districts may occur.

Research has shown shared professional development activities can be a way to improve efficiency, quality, and equity across school districts.¹³ It has been seen as a way of avoiding duplicative costs, facilitating standardization, improving the quality of the training, and making workshops affordable to attendees.

Regional Cooperation and Pupil Transportation

Each school district is required to transport its students (those who are district residents) to its schools¹⁴ and to private schools within district borders.¹⁵ A school district sending students to a designated high school in another district must provide transportation to that school.¹⁶ Likewise, a school district is obligated financially to transport its high school students to an out-

¹⁰ C.G.S. Sec. 10-69.

¹¹ Many school personnel beyond teachers and administrators are required to be certified by CSDE and, therefore, are also subject to continuing education requirement. These personnel include: speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, and school social workers.

¹² C.G.S. Sec. 10-148a.

¹³ M. Craig Stanley. *Massachusetts collaboratives: Making the most of education dollars*. June 2005. White Paper #23. Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research.

¹⁴ C.G.S. Sec. 10-220.

¹⁵ C.G.S. Sec. 10-281.

¹⁶ C.G.S. Sec. 10-277.

of-district technical high school or regional agricultural science center.¹⁷ In addition, any school district sending students at any grade level requiring special education to schools or programs outside the school district is obligated to provide transportation to those programs. Some Connecticut school districts own and operate school buses for students receiving both general education and special education. More commonly, school districts contract with one or more transportation providers to meet their various student transportation needs.

One common way in which local school districts cooperate around student transportation is when two or more districts are sending students to the same out-of-district special education program. The school districts identify the opportunity to combine two or more students onto the same bus trip and then work out an agreement to share the cost. This may occur by one town reimbursing the other town for a proportion of the cost of that bus trip, or by asking the provider to simply bill each district for one half of the cost of that particular trip.

A less frequently used method of cooperative transportation procurement occurs when school districts work together to solicit a single bid for the provision of either general education or special education transportation services. Following the consolidated bidding process, each district then enters a separate contract with the transportation company, although the terms of each contract are consistent with the specifications of the joint bid.

Sometimes multiple school districts use a RESC to provide transportation to students receiving special education. The mutual election of a RESC as transportation provider often leads to regional efficiencies. A RESC providing transportation for multiple districts to the same destination school will usually identify ways to combine trips and facilitate any necessary formalities to allow the participating districts to realize cost savings while also using the RESC's transportation resources efficiently.

Legislation passed in June 2015 (P.A. 2015-5, Sec. 275) requires each RESC to develop a regional special education transportation plan and submit it to the State Board of Education (SBE) and the legislature's education committee by October 1, 2016. The resulting plans may lead to further RESC facilitation of regional cooperation in the realm of special education transportation over the next few years.

Regional Cooperation and Purchasing

Many school districts in Connecticut use cooperative purchasing for tangible items, such as office and educational supplies, furniture, athletic field turf, and heating oil, and for services like insurance, security, and risk management. There are many different kinds of entities with which school districts may cooperate for purchasing goods, materials, and services. Districts may participate in RESC-based purchasing cooperatives, take advantage of state bids, or take advantage of bids by regional or national purchasing cooperatives. Alternatively, a district may purchase cooperatively with the municipality in which it is located or participate through that municipality's membership in a council of government (COG)-based purchasing cooperative. There are also situations in which two or more school districts, independent of a RESC or other regional entity, cooperatively negotiate to achieve a better price together than any one might reach independently.

¹⁷ C.G.S. Sec. 10-97.

Health care benefits. As of 2010, state law explicitly permits two or more local or regional boards of education or municipalities, in any combination, to enter into a written agreement to act as a single entity to provide medical or health care benefits to employees.¹⁸ At least two groups – each consisting of boards of education, municipalities, and a RESC – have formed cooperatives for the purpose of providing medical and other health care benefits. Boards of education may also pool employees for purposes of negotiating employee health insurance coverage.

Medical coverage is also an area where a school district may cooperate with the municipality in which it is located. Moreover, as town-affiliated entities, school districts may obtain other insurances (e.g., workers compensation or premises liability) through the Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA), which is a municipal member owned and operated risk management cooperative.

Regional Cooperation and Administrative/Back Office Functions

School districts may also join together to share administrative or back office personnel and functions. For districts to share a superintendent is specifically contemplated by state law.¹⁹ Two or more school districts may also jointly employ a business manager, food services director, or other administrative employee. Even without directly sharing staff, districts may cooperate for operational functions such as information technology system development or maintenance, or building and grounds maintenance.

Information technology (IT) for schools and school districts is a rapidly evolving field that encompasses many instructional and operational school functions including:

- supporting student educational activities;
- allowing parental monitoring of student grades and work completion;
- allowing administrative and support staff to track student progress;
- relaying messages such as for weather closures or special events; and
- providing a platform for administrative and back office staff for financial management functions.

Districts may cooperate with one another or a RESC for IT system development, support, or technical assistance. A district may also share its IT resources with the municipality in which it is located, or use a common platform for financial management.

There are also instances where districts have agreements with the municipalities in which they are located for building and/or grounds maintenance. This may involve shared staff or the availability of town personnel and equipment for work needing to be done at school facilities or, alternatively, with school district equipment and personnel being available to perform work at town facilities.

¹⁸ C.G.S. Sec. 7-464b.

¹⁹ C.G.S. Sec. 10-157a.

Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs)

Almost every state has educational services agencies, which are regional entities providing special education and other services to multiple school districts in a particular geographic area.²⁰ In Connecticut, these entities are called Regional Educational Service Centers, or RESCs.

Created in 1972, RESCs are public education agencies whose main purpose is to “furnish programs and services” to Connecticut’s public school districts.²¹ In order to establish a RESC, a minimum of four local or regional boards of education within any of the 15 state planning regions designated by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) must apply. The interested boards of education must prepare a plan for the proposed RESC’s organization and operation, and submit it to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) for review and approval. One RESC per each of the 15 OPM planning regions is allowed except in cases where there is a pupil population of 50,000 or more in a region, in which case, a maximum of two RESCs would be permitted.²²

There are currently six RESCs in Connecticut. Each RESC operates in a “catchment area,” composed of 16 to 36 school districts. Appendix C contains both a map and a list of the school districts within each RESC region. The six RESCs and their central office locations are:

- Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) (North Haven);
- Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) (Hartford);
- Cooperative Education Services (C.E.S.) (Trumbull);
- EASTCONN (Hampton);
- EDUCATION CONNECTION (Litchfield); and
- LEARN (Old Lyme).

School districts choose whether to join the RESC serving their catchment area. Currently, all school districts have chosen to join their RESC. If a school district wishes to join a RESC outside its particular region, the district must obtain the approval of the majority of the outside RESC members at the time of application.

Although many similar services are provided at all six RESCs, some individual programs and services are only offered at some RESCs. A school district (or group of school districts) may purchase a service or program unavailable at its home RESC from an out-of-region RESC.

Membership dues are charged to each participating district. For example, the CREC website notes that local school districts become members through an annual fee of 20 cents per pupil.²³ If a district had 5,000 students, the dues would be \$1,000.

²⁰ Office of Legislative Research. *Regional and Statewide Special Education Service Delivery in Selected States*. 2015-R-0013.

²¹ C.G.S. Sec. 10-66a.

²² C.G.S. Sec. 10-66a.

²³ See <http://www.crec.org/about/index.php>. Accessed on August 31, 2015.

Use of RESCs encouraged. The Connecticut State Department of Education encourages boards of education to use the services provided by RESCs. For example, CSDE is authorized to favor grant applications that show use of RESC-provided services or joint purchasing agreements among districts for instructional or other supplies, testing materials, special education services, health care services, or food services.²⁴ In a 2013 CSDE report on small school districts, it was noted that RESCs could play a key role in growing regional cooperation, including developing a common school year calendar and looking for greater efficiencies for pupil transportation.²⁵

Like school districts, RESCs are eligible to apply to CSDE for Interdistrict Cooperative Grants for establishing cooperative programs across school districts.^{26 27} Examples of programs funded by interdistrict cooperative grants include LEARN's *Reading Buddies*, EDUCATION CONNECTION's *LEGO League*, and ACES's *Math Does Count*.

Agri-Science Centers

Connecticut's Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers (known as agri-science centers) were first established in 1955 as vocational-agricultural centers, through a regional pilot program at Middletown High School.²⁸ The name change to agricultural science and technology centers reflects the increased need for science, technology, and math to complete these programs.

The establishment and operation of agri-science centers is outlined in statute.²⁹ Agri-science centers serve students in grades 9-12 and may only be operated by a local or regional school district. An agri-science center is required to have a consulting committee to advise the local operating board of education. Two representatives from each participating district serve on the center advisory board. Representatives are required to have knowledge in the areas of agriculture or aquaculture. Additional oversight is provided by a CSDE education consultant who conducts an on-site program review of each center every three to five years.

The purpose of an agri-science center is to provide opportunities for interested students in local and regional school districts to receive an agricultural science and technology education.³⁰ An agri-science center is usually embedded in an existing high school.³¹ The centers operate on a

²⁴ C.G.S. Sec.10-66o.

²⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education. *Report on the Study of Small School Districts Pursuant to Section 17 of Public Act 12-116*. October 15, 2013. Accessed on-line at http://eosweb/EOSWEB_Linked_Documents/PA12-116_s17_Oct_2013.pdf on August 31, 2015.

²⁶ C.G.S. Sec. 10-74d.

²⁷ Interdistrict programs promote educational opportunities for students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.

²⁸ State-aided vocational-agricultural courses were in existence as early as 1920 in the towns of Simsbury, Woodbury, Washington, Killingly, and Thompson. See State Department of Education Division of Vocation, Technical and Adult Education, Bureau of Vocational Services. *Agriculture Education in Connecticut: A Summary Report*. June 1992.

²⁹ C.G.S. Secs. 10-64 through 10-66.

³⁰ C.G.S. Secs. 10-64 to 10-66.

³¹ Only the Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science and Technology Center and the New Haven Regional Agriculture/Aquaculture Science and Technology Center, Sound School are stand-alone programs not embedded in high schools.

full-year basis in order for students to receive occupational instruction, as well as supervision, in occupational experience programs.³² Students may work in supervised agricultural experiences during the summer months and at least one teacher is available every day to provide assistance as needed.

School districts that do not have agri-science centers must designate one or more centers in other districts for their students to attend, and agreements are formed between each sending school district and the agri-science center.³³ The agreement formed between the center and sending district may include the number of available program acceptances and admission criteria.³⁴ An agreement between the sending school and an agri-science center must specify in writing a certain number of students each school will send or receive, or in the absence of specific numbers, the sending school must send at least the average number of students who attended in the last three school years.³⁵ Districts are required to give agri-science center personnel access to their schools for recruiting purposes. Appendix D contains a list of the sending school districts for each agri-science center.

In FY 14, there were 19 agri-science centers located in 14 local and five regional Connecticut public schools. Appendix D also contains the agri-science center locations. The total number of students enrolled in agri-science centers statewide was 3,443 in FY 14 (a 13 percent increase from FY 10), representing less than one percent of all public school students. The number of students enrolled in individual agri-science centers ranges from 59 students (Vernon) to 506 students (Bridgeport), with a median enrollment of 130 students.

Designated High Schools

Any school district that does not have a high school has to designate at least one high school in another district that its students can attend.³⁶ In FY 15, there were 17 school districts that designated 16 different high schools for their students to attend.³⁷ Appendix E shows the school districts that send their high school students to other districts.

A total of 4,386 attended designated high schools statewide in FY15 (less than one percent of all public school students). The number of students sent to designated high schools by each district ranged from a low of 29 (Union school district) to a high of 1,585 (Norwich school district), with a median of 178 students. If the number of high school students per grade was estimated as 25 percent of these figures, the median number of 178 students would equate to approximately 44 students per high school grade.

The number of students received by designated high schools per district varied considerably. For example, in FY 15, The Gilbert School received one student from the Hartland

³² Conn. Agency Regs. Sec. 10-64-2.

³³ C.G.S. Sec. 10-64(d).

³⁴ C.G.S. Sec. 10-64 (a).

³⁵ C.G.S. Sec. 10-65 (b).

³⁶ C.G.S. Sec. 10-33.

³⁷ The 16 high schools designated by the 17 school districts in FY 15 were: Bolton, Granby, Griswold, Killingly, Lebanon, Ledyard, Montville, New Fairfield, New Milford, Norwich Free Academy, Regional School District 12, Regional School District 19, Stafford, The Gilbert School, Windham, and Woodstock Academy.

school district, and the Lebanon school district received two students from the Columbia school district. On the other hand, Norwich Free Academy received 1,564 students from the Norwich school district, and The Gilbert School received 511 students from the Winchester school district.³⁸

Some sending school districts only identify one designated high school. For example, in FY15, the Bozrah school district sent all 95 of its high school students to Norwich Free Academy and the Eastford school district sent all 59 of its high school students to Woodstock Academy. Two-thirds of sending districts, however, designate multiple districts, offering their students a choice of high schools. For example, the Sherman school district designated three high schools in FY 15: 20 students went to the Region 12 high school, 66 students went to New Fairfield High School, and 93 students went to New Milford High School.

Cooperative Arrangements and Designated High Schools

Formal cooperative arrangements under C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a are sometimes formed between a district without a high school and the school district containing the designated high school. There are currently two cooperative arrangements for this purpose:

- approximately 250 Salem high school students attend East Lyme High School, with their approximately 875 high school students; and
- approximately 135 Sterling high school students attend Plainfield High School, with their approximately 600 high school students.

In the case of the Salem and East Lyme school districts, East Lyme High School had served as the designated high school for Salem from 1979 through 1996. The transition to a cooperative arrangement pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-158a in 1997 enabled Salem to help fund the East Lyme High School expansion through eligibility for a state school building project grant. Similarly, Plainfield served as the designated high school for Salem from 1924 through 2000. The two school districts subsequently formed a cooperative agreement in 2001 for the purpose of building and maintaining a new facility for Plainfield High School. Such cooperative arrangements must be for a period of at least 20 years.

Regional School Districts

The process for establishing a regional school district (RSD) is detailed in state statute.³⁹ Two or more towns must agree to create a combined board of education that is responsible for providing the education of some or all of the students from every involved town. Regional school districts can be formed to serve any grade level or combination of grade levels. There are 17 regional school districts in the state. Table 1 lists the regional school districts, along with their grade levels and member towns. A map of Connecticut showing the location of the regional school districts can be found in Appendix F.

³⁸ Norwich Free Academy and The Gilbert School are endowed academies that are located in Norwich and Winchester respectively. Endowed academies are private entities, governed by boards of directors, and not affiliated with or controlled by any municipal board of education.

³⁹ C.G.S. Secs. 10-39 through 10-63t.

In total, 47 towns participate in the 17 regional school districts. Eight regional school districts involve two towns each and seven districts involve three towns each, for a total of 37 towns. The remaining 10 towns comprise the two remaining regional school districts: Region 1 has six participating towns and Region 7 has four.

Of the 17 regional school districts, nine serve all grades (K-12),⁴⁰ five serve middle school and high school (7-12), and another three are high school-only districts (9-12). If a regional school district serves grades K-12, it is the only school district for each participating town. For the eight regional districts that are not K-12, there are also local districts responsible for the remaining grades. Twenty-seven of the 47 towns involved in a regional school district have a local school district also.

As of October 2013, there were over 27,000 students enrolled in regional school districts (accounting for 5 percent of students enrolled in public schools). Another 12,000 students are in the 27 local districts associated with regional school districts, bringing total enrollment for towns involved with regional schools to 39,000 students (7 percent of all public school students).

History of Regional School Districts in Connecticut

The first regional school district in the state was formed in the late 1930s. At the time, legislation specific to the area (Litchfield County) and grade level (high school) was passed to enable the towns affected to create the regional school district separate from their local school districts.⁴¹ A more general act allowing the formation of regional high schools was passed in 1941,⁴² followed by legislation in 1945 to allow regionalization of elementary schools.⁴³ The last new regional school district was established in 1989.

⁴⁰ Six of these regional school districts (Nos. 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18) also provide preschool.

⁴¹ 1937 Conn. Spec. Acts 428.

⁴² 1941 C.G.S. Supplement Sec. 131f.

Table 1: Towns with Regional School Districts

| District | No. of Towns | Towns |
|---|--------------|---|
| Grade K – 12 Regional School Districts | | |
| RSD 6 | 3 | Goshen, Morris, Warren |
| RSD 10* | 2 | Burlington, Harwinton |
| RSD 12 | 3 | Bridgewater, Roxbury, Washington |
| RSD 13* | 2 | Durham, Middlefield |
| RSD 14 | 2 | Bethlehem, Woodbury |
| RSD 15* | 2 | Middlebury, Southbury |
| RSD 16* | 2 | Beacon Falls, Prospect |
| RSD 17* | 2 | Haddam, Killingworth |
| RSD 18* | 2 | Lyme, Old Lyme |
| Grade 7 – 12 Regional School Districts | | |
| RSD 4 | 3 | Chester, Deep River, Essex |
| RSD 5 | 3 | Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge |
| RSD 7 | 4 | Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, Norfolk |
| RSD 8 | 3 | Andover, Hebron, Marlborough |
| RSD 11 | 3 | Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland |
| Grade 9 – 12 Regional School Districts | | |
| RSD 1 | 6 | Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon |
| RSD 9 | 2 | Easton, Redding |
| RSD 19 | 3 | Ashford, Mansfield, Willington |

Note: * denotes the districts that also provide preschool

Source: PRI staff analysis of CSDE data

Establishment, Governance, and Dissolution

Several formal actions must be taken before a regional school district can be established.⁴⁴ The process may be initiated by towns, local districts, or regional districts. The possibility of forming a regional school district is then considered by a properly appointed study committee, which produces a report that details whether and why the formation of the district is recommended. The regionalization study report is then sent to the State Board of Education (SBE) for approval. Final approval is only possible with an affirmative town majority vote, in each town, through simultaneous referenda. An overall majority is not enough, as every involved town must independently approve its referendum by majority vote.

Once established, a regional board of education has the same authority and responsibilities as a local board of education. However, a regional board of education differs from a local board of education with regard to budgeting and financing. A budget for a regional school district is voted on by residents of member towns annually, either in person at a regional board meeting or by a paper vote. In either case, the budget for the regional school district is voted on independent of the involved towns' budgets or any other associated local district budget. Unlike the formation or expansion of a regional school district, a regional school budget can be passed by a simple majority of voters from all involved towns. This has sometimes created tension when a budget passed in one town but failed in another. Regional school districts also have other financial differences from local school districts, including bonding authority.

Dissolution of or withdrawal from a regional school district happens in a similar manner to formation of a district. A study committee is formed and, if recommended, the subject of dissolution or withdrawal is put to simultaneous referenda in each of the involved towns. In order for the regional district to be dissolved, or for one or more towns to leave the regional district, all towns must vote affirmatively.⁴⁵ The dissolution process cannot be initiated for at least three years after either a district is formed or a previous dissolution attempt.

⁴³ 1945 Public Act 226, codified at 1945 C.G.S. Supplement Sec. 196h.

⁴⁴ C.G.S. Sec. 10-39 through Sec. 10-63t.

⁴⁵ An exception to the unanimous town rule is that towns can leave with just a majority vote of one town if they are trying to withdraw from a regional school district without a high school.

APPENDICES

Study Scope

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

Focus

Regional cooperation between local boards of education can vary widely, from two school districts developing a cooperative arrangement to provide adult education together, to the creation of a regional school district serving children in grades K-12. This study will examine the prevalence, advantages, and disadvantages of such efforts and identify factors related to implementing, replicating, or expanding potentially beneficial regional cooperative efforts.

Background

Regional cooperation for educational purposes is authorized in a number of different statutes, including:

- Two or more local boards of education may enter into a cooperative arrangement to share programs and services “to enable such boards to carry out the duties specified in the general statutes.” (C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a)
- Two or more local or regional boards of education may enter into an agreement to establish a regional agricultural and technology center. (C.G.S. Sec. 10-64)
- A board of education that does not have a high school may send its students to a designated high school located in another school district per an agreement between the two boards. (C.G.S. Secs. 10-33 and 10-35)
- Regional educational service centers (RESCs) may be established at the request of four or more school boards with CSDE approval. (C.G.S. Sec. 10-166a)
- Two or more towns are permitted to establish a regional school district (C.G.S. Sec. 10-39).

Currently, more than a dozen high schools have regional agricultural science and technology centers that provide training for students planning a career in agriculture. There are 17 regional school districts in the state, with the most recent established in 1987 (Regional District #19, providing grades 9-12 for students in the towns of Ashford, Mansfield, and Willington). Six Regional Education Service Centers help boards of education communicate and collaborate in such areas as professional and curriculum development, special education, and human service programs.

Regional cooperation between local boards of education has been part of the efforts of the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), regional planning organizations, and 2002 program review committee study of regional school district governance. The recent Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission also studied various aspects of regional cooperation between local boards of education, and the proposed PRI study is seen as complementing rather than duplicating these efforts. In 2015, proposed bill no. 778 required PRI to “study regional cooperative agreements between local boards of education.”

Areas of Analysis

1. Identify existing cooperative efforts between two or more local boards of education including:
 - Regional school districts
 - Regional Education Service Centers
 - Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Centers
 - Shared operational arrangements (e.g., administrative services, assistive technology equipment, procurement, transportation)
 - Shared instructional arrangements (e.g., shared staff, special education programs)
2. Describe selected cooperative efforts including:
 - a. Number of school boards of education involved per agreement
 - b. Relative proximity of the schools involved
 - c. Grade level of educational services involved
 - d. Duration of the agreement
 - e. Purpose of the agreement
3. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of certain regional cooperative efforts
 - a. Assess the impact of the agreement on costs, service offerings, or other outcomes
4. If examples are available, examine reasons why attempts to establish cooperative arrangements or regional school districts were not completed
5. Identify cooperative arrangements between local boards of education in other states
 - a. Determine if and under what circumstances any advantageous efforts may be replicated in Connecticut
6. Describe barriers to replicating and expanding advantageous regional cooperative efforts in Connecticut
 - a. Recommend methods and practices to overcome or minimize these barriers

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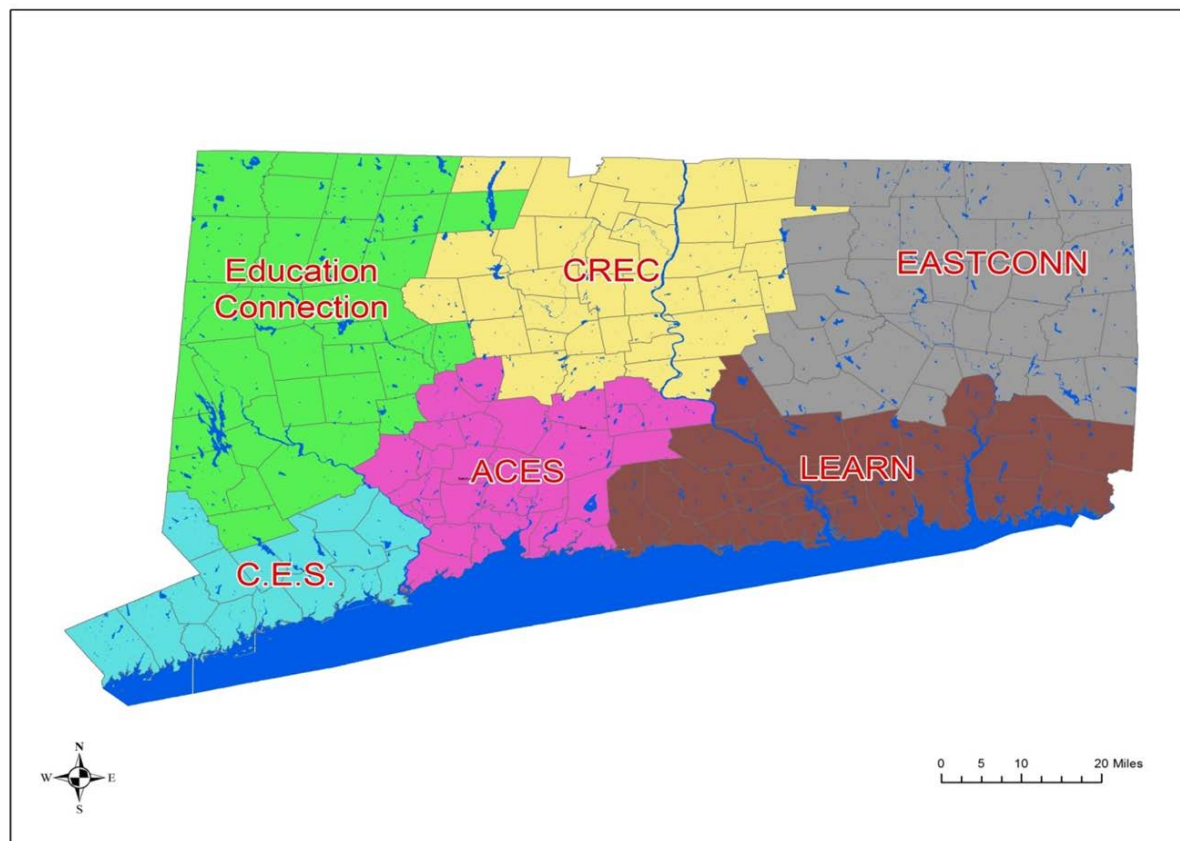
Appendix B

Statutory Authority for Regional Cooperation for Boards of Education

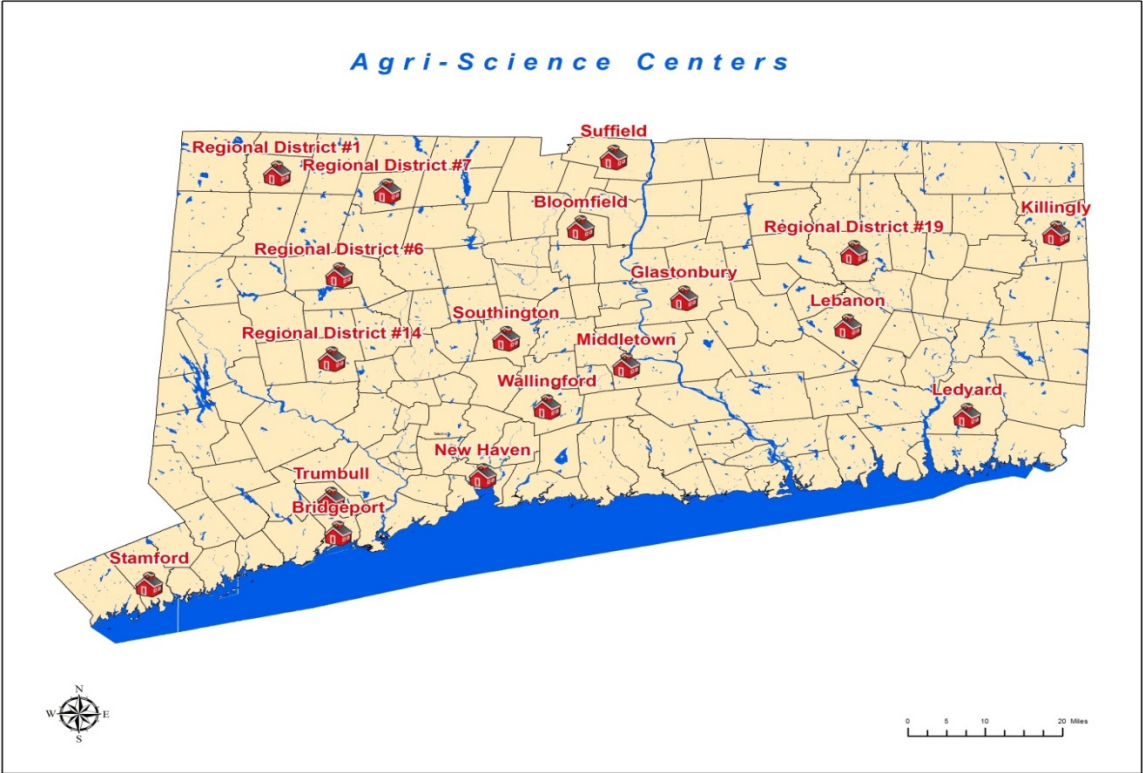
| Range of Regional Cooperation Authority for Local Boards of Education | |
|---|--|
| Authority | Description |
| Cooperative Arrangements C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted 1961, but based on a 1903 statute it replaced Two or more boards of education may agree in writing to establish cooperative arrangements to provide school accommodation services, programs, or activities, special education services, or health care services to enable the school boards to carry out their statutory duties. (Applies to applying for, receiving and expending federal grants; owning property; and employing teachers and other personnel). A committee is required to carry out any cooperative arrangement, in addition to other required features. |
| Shared Service Agreements C.G.S. Sec. 10-239k) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted 2010 (based on MORE Commission recommendation) Two or more boards of education may agree in writing to establish shared service agreements between the boards or between the boards and the municipalities in which the boards of education are located. Considered less formal than cooperative arrangements under C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a, as it does not require, for example, the one year notification of withdrawal from the arrangement, or the establishment of a supervisory committee created by the cooperating BOEs. This statute was based on a recommendation by the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission, with the intent to clarify any confusion surrounding the language in C.G.S. Section 10-158a (e.g., some local boards of education did not believe they were empowered to work with other local boards of education to share services, such as payroll operations, purchasing and other back office operations). |
| Superintendent Sharing C.G.S. Sec. 10-157a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted 1978, but based on a 1903 statute it replaced Two or more boards of education may jointly employ a superintendent under a written agreement for more than three years. |
| Regional Education Service Centers C.G.S. Sec. 10-66a (see 10-66o, 10-66p, 10-66q) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted 1972 (CREC was established earlier in 1966) For the purpose of cooperative action to furnish programs and services, a minimum of four local or regional boards of education within any of the 15 state designated planning regions may form a RESC. The RESC board, which handles operations and management, is made up of at least one board member from each participating town (i.e., dues paying), and is governed by a written agreement with the member boards. A RESC is “a public educational authority acting on behalf of the state of Connecticut...” (Two or more RESCs may join together to provide certain programs or services if boards agree (C.G.S. Sec. 10-66f).) |

| Range of Regional Cooperation Authority for Local Boards of Education | |
|--|--|
| Authority | Description |
| Agri-Science Centers C.G.S. Sec. 10-64 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enacted 1955 (as vocational-agricultural high schools) • School districts that do not have agri-science centers must designate a center or centers located in other districts for their students to attend, and form an agreement with the designated school districts having the agri-science centers. |
| Designated High Schools C.G.S. Sec. 10-33 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enacted 1902 • Any school district that does not have a high school has to designate at least one high school its students can attend. The sending school district must pay tuition for its students to the host district and provide transportation. |
| Regional School Districts C.G.S. Sec. 10-39 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First one established in late 1930s; current law dates to 1941 • Two or more towns may establish a regional school district, following statutory steps. |

Regional Educational Service Centers

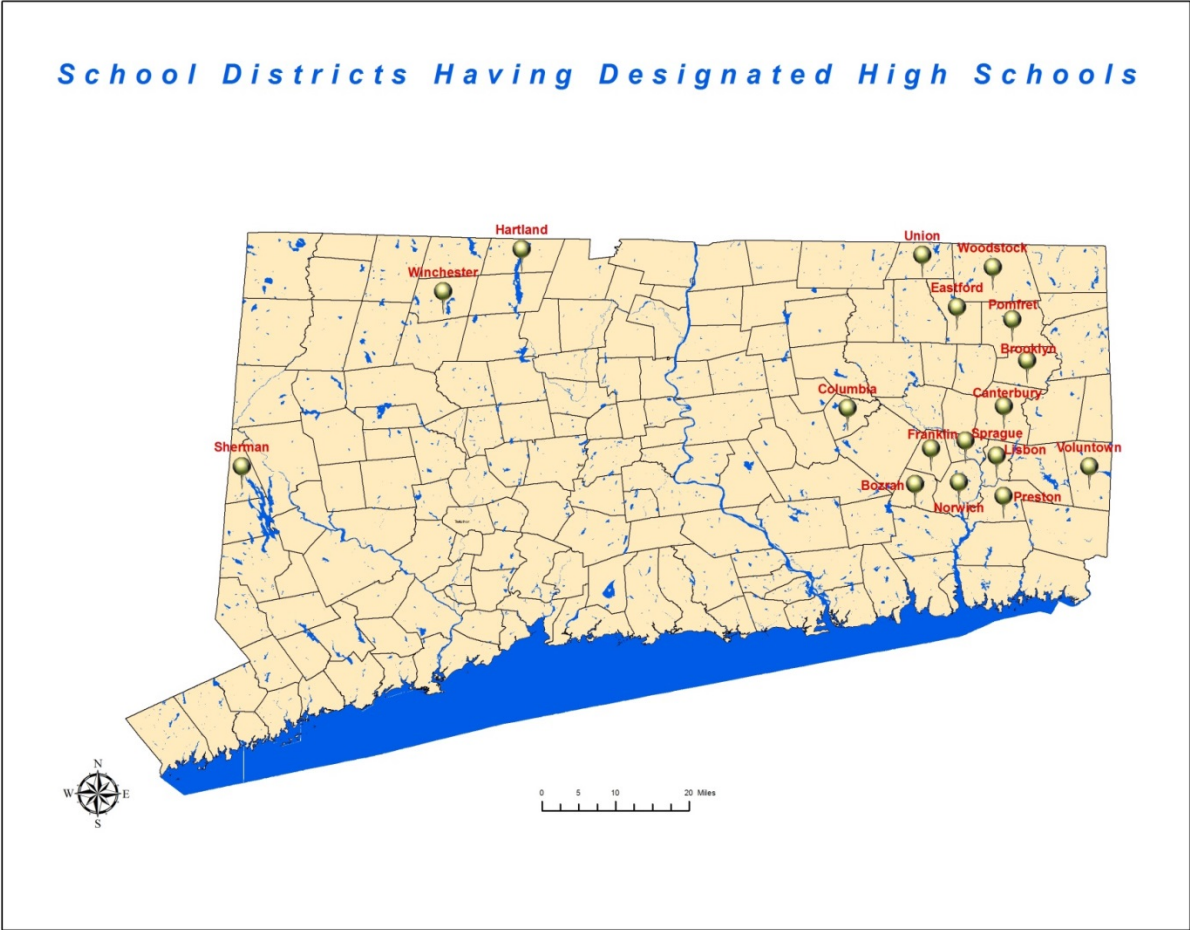


| School Districts Belonging to Each Regional Education Service Center | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) School Districts | | | |
| Ansonia Bethany Branford Cheshire Derby East Haven Hamden | Meriden Middletown Milford Naugatuck New Haven North Branford | North Haven Orange Oxford Reg. District 5 Reg. District 13 Reg. District 16 | Seymour Wallingford Waterbury West Haven Wolcott Woodbridge |
| Cooperative Education Services (CES) School Districts | | | |
| Bridgeport Darien Fairfield Greenwich | Monroe New Canaan Norwalk Reg. District 9 | Ridgefield Shelton Stamford Stratford | Trumbull Weston Westport Wilton |
| Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) School Districts | | | |
| Avon Berlin Bloomfield Bolton Bristol Canton Cromwell East Granby East Hartford | East Windsor Ellington Enfield Farmington Glastonbury Granby Hartford Hartland Manchester | New Britain New Hartford Newington Plainville Portland Reg. District 10 Rocky Hill Simsbury Somers | Southington South Windsor Suffield Vernon West Hartford Wethersfield Windsor Windsor Locks |
| EASTCONN School Districts | | | |
| Andover Ashford Bozrah Brooklyn Canterbury Chaplin Colchester Columbia Coventry | Eastford Franklin Griswold Hampton Hebron Killingly Lebanon Lisbon Mansfield | Marlborough Plainfield Pomfret Putnam Reg. District 8 Reg. District 11 Reg. District 19 Scotland Sprague | Stafford Sterling Thompson Tolland Union Voluntown Willington Windham Woodstock |
| EDUCATION CONNECTION School Districts | | | |
| Barkhamsted Bethel Brookfield Canaan Colebrook Cornwall Danbury Kent | Litchfield New Fairfield New Milford Newtown Norfolk North Canaan Plymouth Redding | Reg. District 1 Reg. District 6 Reg. District 7 Reg. District 12 Reg. District 14 Reg. District 15 Salisbury | Sharon Sherman The Gilbert School Thomaston Torrington Watertown Winchester |
| LEARN School Districts | | | |
| Clinton East Haddam East Hampton East Lyme Groton | Guilford Ledyard Madison Montville New London | North Stonington Norwich Old Saybrook Preston Reg. District 4 | Reg. District 17 Reg. District 18 Salem Stonington Waterford Westbrook |



| School Districts with Agreements to Send Students to Agri-Science and Technology Centers | |
|---|--|
| School District with Agri-Science Center | Sending School Districts^a |
| Bridgeport | Fairfield, Milford, Monroe, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull |
| Regional District No. 14 (Woodbury) | Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Bethel, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Litchfield, Middlebury, Naugatuck, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Oxford, Prospect, Roxbury, Seymour, Sherman, Southbury, Washington, Watertown, Woodbury |
| New Haven | Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Branford, Cheshire, Clinton, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Killingworth, Madison, Middlebury, New Haven, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Orange, Prospect, Seymour, Southbury, West Haven, Wethersfield, Woodbridge |
| Wallingford | Branford, Cheshire, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Meriden, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, West Haven |
| Ledyard | 1. East Lyme/Salem, Groton, Lisbon, Lyme/Old Lyme, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Preston, Stonington, Waterford |
| Trumbull | Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Milford, Monroe, Orange, Shelton, Stratford |
| Regional District No. 1 (Canaan) | Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, Torrington, Out of State (From Massachusetts) |
| Regional District No. 6 (Litchfield) | Burlington, Goshen, Harwinton, Litchfield, Morris, Plymouth, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren |
| Southington | Berlin, Bristol, Cheshire, Farmington, New Britain, Plainville, Terryville, Waterbury, Wolcott |
| Killingly | Brooklyn, Canterbury, Eastford, Griswold, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Thompson, Voluntown, Woodstock |
| Regional District No. 19 (Mansfield) | Ashford, Columbia, Coventry, Mansfield, Willington, Windham |
| Glastonbury | Andover, East Hartford (part-time program), Hartford, Hebron, Manchester, Marlborough, Newington, Wethersfield, Windsor (part-time program) |
| Regional District No. 7 (Winchester) | Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Hartland, New Hartford, Norfolk, Torrington, Winchester |
| Stamford | Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Ridgefield, Stamford, Weston, Westport, Wilton |
| Suffield | Canton, East Granby, Enfield, Granby, Hartford, Hartland, Simsbury, Windsor Locks |
| Bloomfield | East Granby (part-time program), Hartford, West Hartford (part-time program) |
| Middletown | Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Hampton, Essex, Guilford, Haddam, Killingworth, Madison, Middlefield, Portland, Old Saybrook, Rocky Hill, Westbrook |
| Lebanon | Andover, Baltic, Bozrah, Canterbury, Chaplin, Colchester, Columbia, Franklin, Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Salem, Scotland, Sprague |
| Vernon | Bolton, East Windsor, Ellington, Manchester, South Windsor, Stafford, Tolland, Union |
| ^a Sending school districts based on 2014 enrollments. | |

Appendix E



Appendix F

